اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا

Quran English Translation and Tafseer
Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi
Surah 102 At-Takathur

سُوْرَةُ التَّكَاثُرِ مَكِّيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate)

اَلْهٰىكُمُ التَّكَاثُرُ ۱

(102:1) The craving for ever-greater worldly gains and to excel others in that regard keeps you occupied (1)

(1) The words alhakum at-takathur of the original are too vast in meaning to be fully explained in a passage. Alhakum is from lahv which originally means heedlessness, but in Arabic this word is used for every occupation which engrosses man so completely that he becomes heedless of the more important things in life.

When the word alhakum is made from this root, it will mean that man has become so obsessed with some occupation that he has lost sight of everything more important than it. He is preoccupied with it, is wholly lost in pursuit of it and this obsession has rendered him heedless of everything else in life. Takathur is from kathrat, which has three meanings:

(1) That man should strive to gain more and more of everything.

(2) That the people should vie with one another for gaining more and more.

(3) That they should brag and boast of possessing greater abundance of things than others.

Therefore, alhakum at-takathur would mean: Takathur (greed for more and more) has so occupied you that its pursuit has made you heedless of every higher thing in life. In this sentence it has not been indicated as to abundance of what is meant in takathur, heedlessness of what is implied in alhakum, and who are the addressees of alhakum. In the absence of such

an explanation, the words become applicable in their most general and extensive meaning. Thus, takathur does not remain restricted in meaning and application but applies to all the gains and benefits, pleasures and comforts, the passion for acquiring more and more means of power and authority, vying with others in pursuit of these and bragging and boasting of their abundance. Likewise, the addressees of alhakum also do not remain limited but the people of all ages, in their individual as well as collective capacity, become its addressees. It gives the meaning that the passion for acquiring more and more of the worldly wealth, vying with others in pursuit of it and bragging and boasting of its possession has affected individuals as well as societies. Likewise, since in alhakum at-takathur it has not been pointed out as to which people are engrossed in acquisitiveness and of what they are rendered heedless, it has also become very extensive in meaning. It means that the passion for piling up more and more has made the people heedless of everything more important than it. They have become heedless of God, of the Hereafter, of the moral bounds and moral responsibilities, of the rights of others and of their own obligations to render those rights. They are only after raising the standard of living and do not bother even if the standard of humanity be falling. They want to acquire more and more of wealth no matter how and by what means it is acquired. They desire to have more and more means of comfort and physical enjoyment and, overwhelmed by this greed, they have become wholly insensitive as to the ultimate end of this way of living. They are engaged in a race with others to acquire more and more of power, more and more of forces, more and more of weapons, and they have no idea that all this is a means of filling God’s earth with tyranny and wickedness and of destroying humanity itself. In short, takathur has many forms, which have engrossed individuals as well as societies so completely that they have become heedless of everything beyond the world, its benefits and pleasures.

حَتّٰى زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ ؕ﴿٢﴾

(102:2) until you reach your graves. [2]

(2) That is, you spend your whole life in the same craze and endeavor, until the time comes when you must die and leave the world.

كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣﴾

(102:3) Nay, you will soon come to know; [3]

(3) That is, you are under the delusion that the abundance of the worldly goods and surpassing others in it is real progress and success, whereas the opposite is the case. Soon you will know its evil end and you will realize that it was a stupendous error in which you remained involved throughout your life. Soon may mean the Hereafter. That is, for the Being Whose sight comprehends all ages, from eternity to eternity, a few thousand years or a few hundred thousand years can only be a short span of the eternal time. Soon it can also mean death, for death is not very far away from any man, and soon after death man will come to know whether the occupations which engaged him throughout life were a means of good fortune and success for him, or of misfortune and failure.

ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ۝٤

(102:4) nay, again, you shall soon come to know.

كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ ۝٥

(102:5) Nay, would that you knew with certainty of knowledge (what your attitude will lead to, you would never have acted the way you do).

لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ ۝٦

(102:6) You will surely end up seeing Hell;

ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ ۝٧

(102:7) again, you shall most certainly end up seeing it with absolute certainty.

ثُمَّ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ ۝٨

(102:8) Then, on that Day, you will be called to account for all the bounties you enjoyed. (4)

(4) "Then" in this sentence does not mean that accountability will be held after the culprits have been cast into Hell, but it means: Then We give you the news that you will be questioned about these comforts of life, and obviously this questioning will be held at the time of accountability in the divine court. Its main argument is that in several Ahadith it has been reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him) that the believers and the disbelievers, both will have to account for the blessings granted by Allah. However, the people who did not show ingratitude but spent their lives as grateful servants of Allah, will come out successful from the accountability, and those who proved thankless to Allah for His blessings and committed ingratitude by word or by deed, or by both; will emerge as failures.

Jabir bin Abdullah says: The Prophet (peace be upon him) once visited us and we served him with fresh dates and gave him cool water to drink. Thereupon he said: These are of the blessings about which you will be questioned. (Musnad Ahmad, Nasai, Ibn Jarir, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Marduyah, Abd bin Humaid, Baihaqi in Ash-Shuab).

Abu Hurairah has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) once asked Abu Bakr and Umar to accompany him to the place of Abul-Haitham bin at-Taihan Ansari. Thus, he took them to the oasis of Ibn at-Taihan. The latter brought a bunch of dates and placed it before them. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Why didn't you pluck the dates yourself? He said: I thought you would yourselves select and eat dates of your choice. So, they ate the dates and drank cool water. At the end, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: By Him in Whose hand is my life: this is of the blessings about which you will be questioned on the Resurrection Day, the cool shade, the cool dates, the cool water. (This tradition has been narrated in different ways by Muslim, Ibn Majah, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Nasai, Ibn Jarir, Abu Yala and others, on the authority of Abu Hurairah. In some of which the name of the Ansari companion has been mentioned and in some he has been referred to as a person from among the Ansar. This incident has been related with several details by Ibn Abi Hatim from Umar and by Imam Ahmad from Abu Asib, the Prophet's (peace be upon him) freed slave. Ibn Hibban and Ibn Marduyah have related a tradition from Abdullah bin Abbas, which shows that an almost similar thing had happened in the house of Abu Ayyub Ansari.

These Ahadith make it explicit that not only the disbelievers but the righteous believers too will be questioned. As for the blessings which Allah has bestowed on man, they are unlimited and countless. There are many blessings of which man is not even conscious. The Quran says: If you try to count the blessings of Allah, you will not be able to calculate them. (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 34). Countless of them are the blessings which Allah has granted directly to man, and a large number of these are the blessings which man is granted through his own skill and endeavor. About the blessings that accrue to man in consequence of his own labor and skill, he will have to render an account as to how he acquired

them and in what ways he spent them. In respect of the blessings directly bestowed by Allah, he will have to give an account as to how he used them. And in respect of all the blessings, on the whole, he will have to tell whether he had acknowledged that those blessings had been granted by Allah and whether he had expressed gratitude for them to Allah with his heart, and by word and deed, or whether he thought he had received all that accidentally, or as a gift from many gods, or whether he held the belief that although those were the blessings of One God, in their bestowal many other beings also had a part, and for that very reason he had taken them as his gods and worshipped and thanked them as such.